

Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Facebook Posts

December 2024

A thought from Rev Derek: The Polar Express

One of the many joys of living in Dereham is that we sit at one end of the Mid Norfolk railway a track about twelve miles long that runs between Dereham and Wymondham and is the work of a team of volunteers. During the run up to Christmas the station is transformed into a Christmas wonderland and the trains are transformed into a Polar Express experience. The principle is based on the 2004 film "The Polar Express" I won't go into too much detail about the content of the and ruin it for you if you haven't seen it, if not, I can recommend it and like so many films it creates that atmosphere of the magic of Christmas.

For several years the film was a part of our Christmas Eve experience in the Grimshaw family. Because of my work Christmas Eve didn't work in the same way that it does for many people, we would hold the Christingle service at 4pm and then there was a void to fill between then until I turned out again at eleven o'clock to lead the midnight communion service and the Polar Express filled the gap, we would have snacks to eat and this was a part of our tradition.

The experience in Dereham is wonderful. My Daughter and son in law booked tickets months ago for the first evening and I ran them down to the station. The picture was lovely, families were queueing up wearing their pyjamas and dressing gowns with several small children and adults carrying teddies. As anybody who has watched the film, they will know that the train only travels under the cover of darkness, and it is only those who have a golden ticket that can ride. A significant part of the film is that it is only the people who hear the ringing of the bell who believe in Father Christmas and every traveller on the Polar Express leaves with a bell.

The experience reminds us of the magic and wonder of Christmas and even now, I still love to get caught up in the magic of the Christmas story. There is something wonderful about the experience and as we turn the corner into Advent once again this year, I can't help but get caught up in all the wonderful memories of Christmases from my past and during this season of advent as we prepare in so many ways for the big day I plan to use some of my favourite Christmas films as a backdrop to my thoughts for the next few Sundays. Advent is a wonderful season that we ought to value and savour as we wait in eager anticipation.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Beetley



A thought from Rev Jonny:

Over the next few weeks, I am going to focus on the Magnificat and take different aspects of it.

The Magnificat, also known as the Song of Mary, is one of my favourite bits in all Scripture. It is inspired by Psalm 146, sung by a young woman (well, a teenager) who was asked by God to be pregnant with Jesus Christ. To me, Mary was a strong and tough person. She was poor, a peasant, yet God saw what she offered and knew that she was capable of raising Jesus Christ and strong enough to do so. She would have also been compassionate and loving, reflecting God's being into the world – why else would she have been chosen?

The image I have chosen for today is an illustration inspired by Joy Crowley's 'Modern Magnificat'. The words are adapted from the Magnificat. I encourage you to use these words to pray to God and allow the Spirit to offer any insights you may have in response to Mary, to the Magnificat and to God's message that comes through these words.

Image: Mary's Freedom Song (2016) by Bob Henry. Text by Joy Cowley, 2007, adapted from Luke 1:46–55.



THE HIVE AT BLAKENEY
 METHODIST CHURCH, 110 HIGH STREET, NR25 7NX
 SATURDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2.00 – 4.00PM

CAROLS AND CHRISTMAS CHEER!

EXPERIENCE A DRAMATIC TELLING OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

SING YOUR FAVOURITE CAROLS

ENJOY MULLED MOCKTAILS AND MINCEPIES

ALL ARE WELCOME FOR CHRISTMAS FAMILY FUN

EASY ACCESS COME IN – NO NEED TO BOOK!

Follow us on facebook

THE HIVE
 CREATIVITY – SPIRITUALITY – WELL-BEING

Charity Reg. No.: 1134271
 The Hive at Blakeney
 E: thehiveplace@gmail.com T: 07976 286 645



TOFTWOOD METHODIST CHURCH
 CHAPEL LANE. NR19 1LD

INVITE YOU TO THE

“CHAPEL COFFEE SHOP”

ON THE FIRST SATURDAY

EACH MONTH

10.00 – 12.00 am



**HOMEMADE CAKE STALL
 PRIZE RAFFLE AND MUCH MORE**

“CHRISTMAS COFFEE SHOP”

Saturday December 7th
 Come and start the celebrations
 with us
 Guest stall is a Christmas Craft stall

We look forward to seeing you.

Walsingham Methodist Church
 High Street, Walsingham

Presents a large exhibition of

Nativity Cribbs



Tuesday 10th
 Thursday 12th – Friday 13th December
 11am to 3pm
 and
 Saturday 14th 11am to 2pm

All welcome – Free entry



A thought from Dee:

In half-term we took our Grandson Thomas (11) to Cromer, and as we walked along the promenade, we were fascinated to see large cranes, diggers and lorries all doing different jobs creating sea defences with large boulders. Thomas was curious, as we were too, to know why they were digging big trenches in the sand and then filling them up with these boulders, and not just piling them up on top.

As there was a man near us, obviously supervising, we asked him that question. He explained that if they just piled them on top of the sand, even though these boulders were massive and very, very heavy, if a high tide came, the sand underneath would gradually be washed away and they would sink down and be of no use. They needed a sure foundation for it to be effective!



This immediately brought into mind the words of Jesus who spoke of wise foolish men, one building his house on rock and the other on sand! (Matthew 7: 24-27) Christ is our sure foundation, our corner-stone, we must dig deep in our faith as we face the storms of life, and when we get battered about, we must hold on to this thought – *'Mid the world's despair and turmoil one firm anchor holding fast: God eternal reigns forever, God the first and God the last.'*

Rev Anne writes - this picture shows the last leaf! All the others had gone but this one was holding on! Ever feel like that? We look back to a time when churches were full and there were plenty of people for every task and feel we're on a downward trajectory! The last leaf made me think of Elijah. After his battle with the prophets of Baal, he was exhausted and fled. He complained to God that all his efforts had brought him to this point of exhaustion, where he was the last one left and the queen wanted to kill him too! God cared for him and revealed himself to him, with a still, small voice. And then he showed him that he wasn't the last after all.



If we know our church history, there are ups and downs - mergers, closures, new churches and revival. Why should now be any different? This is not just a church phenomenon either! All sorts of clubs, pubs, and uniformed organisations go through similar things. If we feel like we're one of the last leaves standing in the Church, take time to be with God and ask Him to show you what He's doing now.

If you want to read the story of Elijah for yourself, you'll find it in the Old Testament 1 Kings 17-19.

A thought from Rev Derek: A Christmas Carol

Sometimes is quite difficult to keep churning out thoughts for every Sunday, particularly over the Christmas period, so, I have decided to use films as the basis of my reflections this year. Last week we thought about the excellent “Polar Express” and it seems to me that you can’t reflect on Christmas stories without thinking about Charles Dickens wonderful story “A Christmas Carol”. One of my earliest memories was the Sunday School in Calverley putting on an abridged performance of the story, my brother played the part of Tiny Tim and my uncle Richard made him a crutch especially for the play. I played the part of “the boy in the street” and when Ebenezer Scrooge asked me what day it was, I had to reply with “today, why it’s Christmas Day”. Scrooge asked me if I knew the poulterers with the prize turkey in the window and I replied “what, the one as big as me?” and ever since then I have loved the story and each Christmas I try to spent some time watching the film. My favourite adaptation is the 1984 TV film starring the likes of George C Scott, Edward Woodward, Frank Finlay, and Susannah York and I have it on DVD and it is now part of my Christmas Tradition.

In many ways Charles Dickens change the whole experience of Christmas through the telling of this delightful story about a man who has been damaged by his childhood, which has made him a bitter and twisted old man to the degree that by the time of the story he was miserly with his money and hated Christmas. Ever since the story was told, misers have been called scrooges. The storyline has been told dozens of times over in different films, somebody hates Christmas for some reason and doesn’t want anything to do with all the merriment and celebrations. The storyline for Scrooge took him through the visit of four spirits who change his life, his mood and his attitude to Christmas to the point when he wakes on Christmas morning a transformed man, and this pattern is repeated in several different films suggesting that there is something almost magical about Christmas that changes people’s lives.

As we journey through the season of Advent this year and we are busy doing all the things that need to be done in preparation for the big day, we need to remember that as we get swept up in all the festivities, that not everybody feels the same way that we do. There will be people who are facing their first Christmas without somebody they love sharing the season with them. There will be people who know that this may well be the last Christmas they will experience. There will be those who will have run up credit card bills that they know they won’t be able to pay off in the new year, there will be parents who can’t afford to buy their children the things they want for Christmas and feel so lost in grief. We talk glibly about the “Season of good will” and see the caricature of Ebenezer Scrooge. Spare a thought for those this Christmas time who don’t feel like celebrating and may feel like echoing the words of Scrooge Christmas! Bah humbug!”



Please pray for the congregation and community in Dereham



On 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global statement on human rights was adopted. So, on 10 December each year, we celebrate Human Rights Day. Why should its anniversary matter to Methodists? Jude Levermore, Head of Mission at the Methodist Church, shares this reflection and prayer to mark Human Rights Day and explore its Methodist heritage. Click the link below to read more...

<https://bit.ly/4ir2tjr>



A thought from Rev Jonny:

My whole being praises in my Lord,
and my spirit is joyous in God, my Liberator!
For God looks upon this humiliated peasant woman;
see, from now on, every single person will call me blessed!
For the Powerful One has made me great,
and Most Holy is their name.
And God's compassion is for each and every person,
and they are in awe of God.
(Luke 1:46b-50, Jonny's translation from the Greek)



'Super Marie' is an artwork by Soasig Chamaillard, which I think is fantastic! It shows off the power of Mary and does so with real fun and humour. Some may see this as irreverent, but superheroes today often point towards strength, hope and responsibility. They have the power to change the world; they bring a hoped-for change into the world by making things better; and they take up the responsibility of doing this work (remember that quote, "With great power comes great responsibility" from Spiderman?)

Mary demonstrates these qualities. Her strength is shown in her stomping on the snake, which is often seen as either evil or Satan – a woman who can stomp on the Devil with ease is definitely strong! Her hope is in God's working in and through her to produce the Son and to show the world the extent of God's love for all and how this love works. Her responsibility is seen in the hard work of being a mother to Jesus Christ, who was undoubtedly a precocious child! Mary is a superhero! However, what makes her different to most superheroes is how she understands that power.

Superheroes are often powerful in of themselves, a sort of individualistic power. But what Mary does is point back to God, and we see this in the beginning of her song when she praises God and God's work in the world. We are tasked to do likewise, to be 'superheroes' and point back to God and the love that infuses us.

Image: Super Marie (2007) by Soasig Chamaillard.

Walsingham Methodist Church
High Street, Walsingham

Presents a large exhibition of
Nativity Crib



Tuesday 10th
Thursday 12th – Friday 13th December
11am to 3pm
and
Saturday 14th 11am to 2pm

All welcome – Free entry



Carol Service

Saham Hills Methodist Chapel December 15th

Popular Carols Refreshments

2.30 – 3.30 pm

A thought from Aileen Fox:

We are still in Advent and yet the frenzy of Christmas present hunting, shopping and all that goes on is really ramping up. As many of you may know I collect nativity cribs and they reflect the different cultures of each country. There are Olive wood ones from the Holy Land, ceramics from Peru, Indonesia, Germany and wooden ones from Italy, recycled ones, in fact all sorts including crochet and knitted sets. However, a curved nativity has made me really think. It shows Mary Joseph and Jesus together at the centre but everyone else is taking their time to reach Jesus.

Are we taking our own journey slowly thinking and preparing for the birth of Jesus, or are we rushing ahead to Christmas Day? Let's slow down and think about the greatest gift we have been given, Jesus!



Please pray for the congregation and community in Fulmodeston



A thought from Rev Derek: *It's a wonderful life*

I remember picking up the Christmas TV Times years ago, looking at what was on offer and complaining that films like *Lassie*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *It's a Wonderful Life* were on yet again. I now find myself looking back over more Christmases than I care to remember and find these films are, in my opinion, classics. I try to make it part of my Christmas tradition to sit down and watch *It's a Wonderful Life* each Christmas, and sad as I am, I actually went out and bought the DVD a few years back. It is perhaps important to understand that this film was originally released in 1946 and is based on a short story, "The Greatest Gift" self-published by Philip Van Doren Stern in 1943. This means that when this story was first told, the world was in the midst of war, Barnes Wallace had only just pioneered the "bouncing bombs" and the Battle of Arnhem hadn't happened. As Van Doren Stern penned his story, loosely based on Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol*, the world was living in fear, regardless of which country people claimed as their nationality.

If you are one of the few people who have seen Frank Capra's masterpiece featuring the iconic actor James Stewart, I won't ruin the plot for you, but would recommend that you watch it, the chances are that it will feature somewhere on our dozens of TV channels this Christmas, if not, it is easy enough to find on the internet to watch for free. The premise of the story is that George Bailey, who is down on his luck, believes that the world would be a better place without him, and in the most desperate moment of his life, he encounters the somewhat quirky Clarence Odbody, an angel who hasn't got his wings yet and in response to George Bailey's claim "the world would have been a better place if I'd never been born" Clarence the angel takes him on a journey to dispute the claim. I can't help but wonder if the people who first saw this film in the "picture houses" a year after the end of the war as the world was trying to deal with all they had experienced found comfort in this delightful little story.

The Christmas story features angels, they are messengers from God, and they seem to bring messages of peace, hope, and love. In my work I come across people more often than you might imagine who talk seriously about angels and their belief that they exist. Looking back through my life, I have met more than my fair share of angels, who have been there when I have felt a bit like poor George Bailey in the film. Fortunately, I have never reached that moment of desperation and maybe that has been because of those who have caught me before I fell and helped me find my way through. The remarkable thing is, that most of the angels I could name, would possibly never identify themselves as such and maybe will never know how much they have done to save me.

- Have you ever felt down and close to the edge?
- Who would have lost out if you had never been born?
- Who are your angels?
- Why not stop for a moment and thank God that he has sent people like this to help us in our times of need.



A thought from Rev Jonny:

The arm of God has done powerful things!
Those who think in their hearts that they are better than others will be scattered away;
God pulls down these rulers from their thrones
and raises up the humiliated;
The poor's every desire is satisfied with excellent things,
and the rich are rejected, left with nothing.
(Luke 1:51-53, Jonny's translation from the Greek)

Mary sings of God's goodness, power and desire for the world and she sings with such delight in God. But there is the challenge in the song for us: the powerful people being scattered, pulled down and left with nothing; whereas those who are oppressed are raised up, with every desire satisfied and are remembered with compassion. How are we to respond to this?

The painting depicts the Annunciation found in Luke 1:26-38, where Mary is asked whether she will bear Jesus Christ. Is our response to be like Mary, of receiving the call to bear Christ in us and to say yes to that call? I think Mary is a profound example of being a disciple of Christ as she responds to God's working in the world with such joy and affirmation.

So a question to ponder: how do we respond to the call that is asked of each of us to bear Jesus Christ in us, and what form does this take?



Image: Annunciation (2017) by Nicholas Mynheer.

